

THE MORNING NEWS

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Best birthday gift ever!! A first trip to Aruba from a veteran visitor to her beloved cousin



A toast to dinner

ORANJESTAD -- Carolyn Pollack-Kruel is only one year away from her 35th anniversary of an annual trip to Aruba, where she has connected and is well-known among the local community. For decades she traveled her with her mother and aunt, and in 2006 she and her husband, George, were married at the Santa Ana Church in Noord.

As a busy travel agent, Carolyn has introduced countless other devotees like herself to Aruba, and for the 59th birthday of her cousin, Sonny Pollack, she could think of no better gift than treating him and his wife Roberta to a mid-winter trip to the island to celebrate.

Carolyn and Sonny both reside in Aliquippa, PA, and

last time Sonny took a vacation beyond U.S. borders was for a four-day honeymoon cruise with his bride Roberta nearly 20 years ago. It was Carolyn's fervent wish to treat her cousin and his wife to this fabulous treat.

For this, Carolyn selected a special "toes in the sand" shore side dinner on the beach at Simply Fish, in the Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino, a favorite dining spot. They were treated like royalty by their server Daniel and his assistant Omar.



Waiter Omar delivers a special BD surprise from cousin Carolyn

a view of the sea is a rare event for them, much less Aruba's spectacular sunsets along the shore. The first and

"We feel as if we have died and gone to heaven," exclaimed Sonny and Roberta. "Aruba is paradise personified." They were also very happy to escape for a week of temperatures well below freezing. They were properly appreciative of living the fantasy of sipping an exotic cocktail while watching the sun set over turquoise tropical seas, as they had never seen before in their lives.

As a travel agent and owner of Ambassatour Travel, it was very easy for Carolyn to arrange this trip for her cousin, as well as providing him accommodations in her duplex townhouse she owns on the island. Knowing Aruba well, she also arranged for him to be surprised with a beautiful cake during their celebratory dinner.

Continued on page 2

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Arctic blast aims at frigid US



A man warms himself on a steam grate with three other homeless men by the Federal Trade Commission, just blocks from the Capitol, during frigid temperatures in Washington

NEW YORK (AFP) - Millions of people in the United States hunkered down yesterday in anticipation of brutal weather from a dangerous Arctic blast that send temperatures plummeting to their coldest in 20 years.

The northeast of the country and parts of Canada have been in the grip of crippling heavy snow and deadly sub-zero temperatures since the turn of the year and the deep freeze is now ripping through the US Midwest and threatening usually balmy areas further south.

The wind chill from the rare "polar vortex" could make it feel as cold as -60 Fahrenheit (-51 Celsius) in places, wea-

ther forecasters say, prompting authorities in several towns and cities to issue warnings telling people to stay indoors and even stock up on food.

In such extreme cold, exposed skin would suffer frostbite in as little as five minutes, experts have cautioned.

The National Weather Service described the frigid temperatures as "life-threatening."

Several weather warnings were in place across more than half of the United States, including for blizzards, gales and flooding.

The Weather Channel said the country should be prepared for an imminent "blast of brutally cold air" that would buffet some states until tomorrow.

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Best birthday gift ever!!

Continued from page 1



Sonny and Roberta enjoy their first Aruban sunset

"Sonny doesn't get away all that often," explains Carolyn. "I just wanted to share this wonderful place George and I love so much with him and his wife. I have arranged a number of tours and filled him in on

the many great things we enjoy while here. I am sure after this visit they will understand why no matter how much I travel, and where ever I go in the world, I always return to Aruba."

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Santa Rosa opens new year with installation of wind mill



ORANJESTAD -- On December 31st The Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery (Santa Rosa) has initiated a reconstruction and installation project of a wind mill at the well at Calabas. In this manner they closed out the year with an important product for Agriculture and livestock in the Noord area.

During 2013 Santa Rosa completed different projects around the island. The primary objective is to provide support during the dry season, which is expected to continue throughout 2014.

Director Nathalie Maduro expressed that they are very happy with the installation of a wind mill in Calabas, a project that was part of their goals for 2013. For quite some time they were aware of the large amount of farmers in the Noord area. In this manner they are now able to provide support to these farmers who are so valuable for our country."

With the installation of this wind mill in Calabas, they can provide sweet water to farmers and livestock breeders for their animals and plantation. The work on this wind mill will be completed during the first month of this New Year which will ensure farmers in Noord the necessary sweet water.

For 2014 Santa Rosa will continue with these projects and will continue to provide the necessary stable production for our local community.



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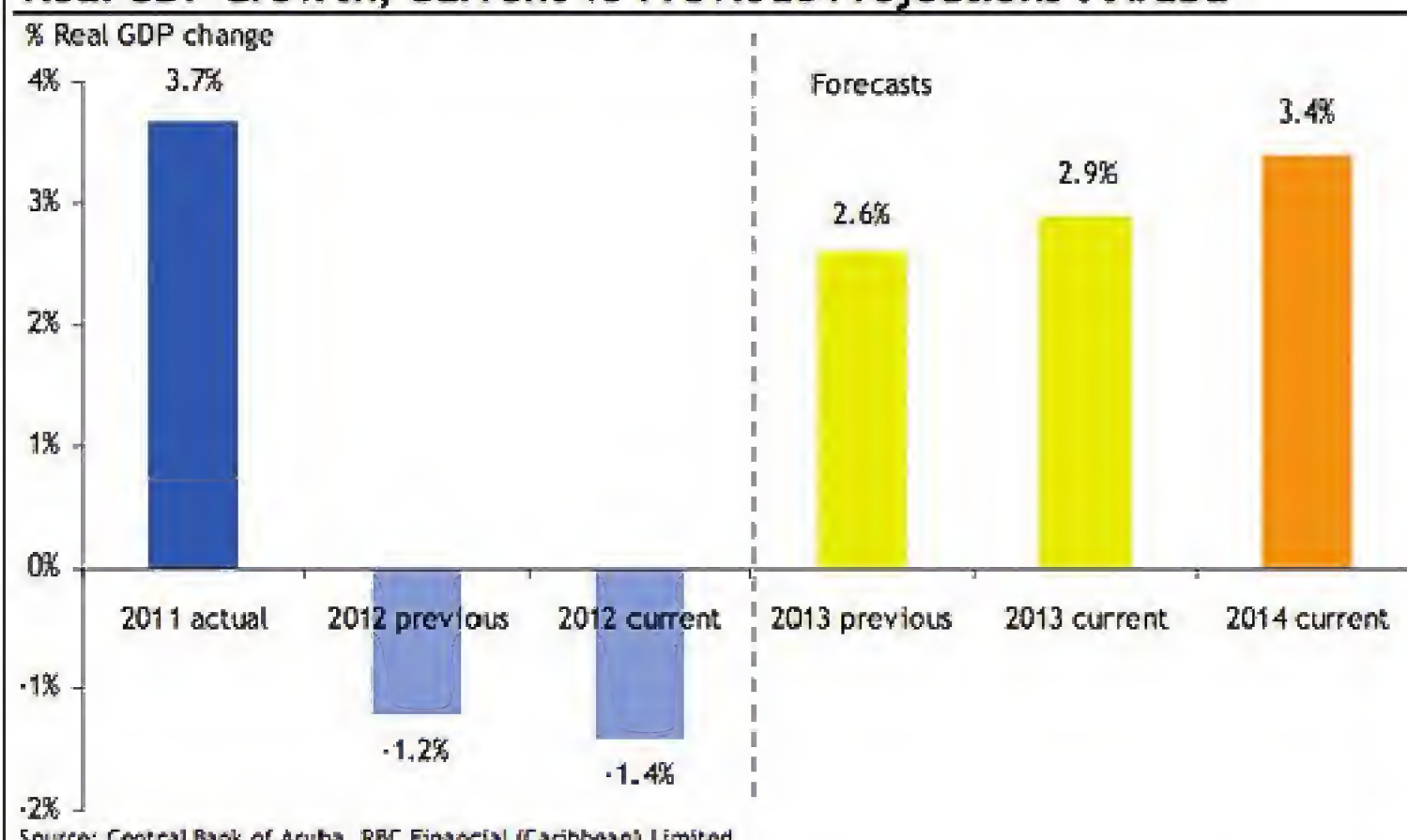
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Aruba: Growth projected to reach 2.9% this year

Real GDP Growth, Current vs Previous Projections : Aruba



ORANJESTAD -- The Central Bank of Aruba's Economic Forecast Monitor for December 2013 revised the previous 2013 growth projection of 2.6% up to 2.9%, and

a 2014 forecast of 3.4% was introduced. Deflation of 2.3% is expected to be registered this year.

The Monthly Bulletin for October 2013 shows a further softening of the foreign reserves position, which fell to an estimated 4.1 months of import cover. For the January to October 2013 period, stopover tourism expanded by 6.8% year-over-year according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO).

The State of the Economy report for H1 2013 shows an overall positive trend in economic activity, though at the apparent expense of fiscal and external balances, and debt.

The Q2 2013 Business Perception Survey reveals continued optimism about current and future economic conditions.

SAC announces offices will stay open until late

For latest information regarding Carnival 60, visit their Face Book page



ORANJESTAD -- Stichting Arubaanse Carnaval – SAC – the non-profit organization which administrates over carnival events, announces that it is busy updating its internet webpage www.carnaval-aruba.net.

SAC has also inaugurated a Face Book page <https://www.facebook.com/StichtingArubaanseCarnaval>. Both internet sources will supply those wishing to follow and attend carnival events taking place over the next two months with all the latest information of this landmark Diamond Jubilee

Carnival.

SAC also informs that, as of January 2, its office will stay open full time, from 9:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Here can be found information, tickets to events, registration for participation and much more. The office will not close during lunch hours and if necessary, will stay open after 6:00 p.m.

The Carnival season already started on January 4, with the Jumbie Jump-In in San Nicolas and will close with the Burning of King Momo on March 4.



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New videos of Waldy Simson

Aruban artist Waldy Simson is now featuring four new videos on his website: artisit.webs.com.



maica.

In the video, "Waldy Simson In South Africa" a featured part is the artist's meeting with Nelson Mandela, a highlight in his career. The video "Exhibition Waldy Simson In De Hal" Imparts an impression of the exhibition Simson has recently hosted in Surinam. In the video Art made by Waldy and Jurio Simson, designed by Jurio, the focus is on Waldy and his work. Jurio is Waldy's son, following in his father's footsteps. It provides a fine impression of their cooperative exhibition at the Gallery Pegasus in Kingston, Jamaica.

The videos can also be viewed on YouTube and Facebook.

ORANJESTAD -- Among the videos, one focuses on Waldy Simson's time in South Africa, during which his works were exhibited for a commemorative event. Another is from a show in In De Hal, Suriname, and another exposition of Waldy with Jurio Simson in Ja-

The Tourism Outlook for 2014

ORANJESTAD -- New Year is a chance for new beginnings. What is true of the world in general is also true of tourism. The tourism industry does not live apart from the rest of the world. It is deeply attached to the economy's undulations, sensitive to issues of security, and can be impacted by a host of unexpected events, ranging from a health crisis to a natural disaster. Certainly 2013 had its successes and challenges and we can expect that 2014 may offer more of the same. Although no one can predict the state of the world throughout 2014, here are some trends that tourism specialists and professionals may want to watch.

1. The state of the economy. Tourism is highly dependent on economic trends. In the latter half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, tourism marketing has placed its emphasis on the middle class market. To a great extent this assumption was highly logical. The middle class forms the largest travel group, and it is only moderately demanding.

2. Sociologically, tourism customers tend to be forgiving of tourism mistakes and somewhat tolerant of less than perfect customer service. The middle class is perhaps the most vulnerable to economic highs and lows and tends to be the class that most easily panics during a downturn. Because the middle class often buys on credit, the cost of credit will have a major impact on its ability and willingness to purchase what appears to it to be non-essential services. On a positive note, in many of the developing economies there is a rising middle class, and these new middle classes appear to be following the same sociological patterns as the middle classes in the more traditionally established economies. Tourism marketers and professionals then would do well to be alert to the following economic trends.

a. Track the cost of credit. Because so much of the middle class' purchases for expendable items is dependent on credit, it is essential to track the trends in credit. If interest rates rise, then middle class purchases become more expensive. When interest rates fall, the same item or service becomes less expensive.

b. Watch and understand set costs that impact the middle class. The middle class must live on some form of budget. That means that if there is a



major rise in taxes or other required services, the middle class may tend to hold back on what it considers luxury items. For example, in the United States right now there is doubt as to what the cost of health care will be in 2014. Should the cost go down, then, psychologically, the public's willingness to travel may rise (assuming all else being the same). Should health care costs, however, spiral, then the tourism industry may suffer.

c. Pay attention to the stock markets around the world. When the stock markets tend to rise, many people feel wealthier and are more willing to spend money. The opposite is true of a falling market. Note that the psychological macro impact is not connected to an individual's personal wealth. Members of the middle class tend to spend money as influenced by macro rather than micro trends.

relationship to wealth and education. Thus, wealthier and better educated people tend to pay less attention to printed or televised marketing than do those who are firmly in the middle classes of a society.

4. Issues of Security. Visitors and tourism, on the whole, are security sensitive. The coming year will present tourism security specialists with any number of challenges. Among these are:

a. Terrorism has not diminished but rather mutated. Single cell terrorism groups will increase their threat to the tourism industry and will be harder than ever to detect.

b. 2014 will see a number of major and mega events. Among these are Soccer's World Cup. These games will occur throughout Brazil and that nation will have to be vigilant regarding both acts of terrorism and acts of random



3. What is true of the middle class is not necessarily true for other economic classes. Although the lower economic classes do not do a lot of pleasure travel, those in the upper classes tend to be less economically dependent regarding leisure travel. Those who form part of the upper strata of society, however, tend to be more demanding and expect an ever-greater number of services. Members of this cohort rarely believe marketing. Marketing has an inverse rela-

violence.

c. Tourism Policing Forces (TOPPs) around the world will be more needed than ever. If security personnel can convince marketers of the importance of TOPPs units then these forces may help to create a dent in international crimes against tourists. If, however, these forces remain underfunded then additional problems may occur.

Continued on page 5



Early Bird Menu
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Cas Animal Cont'd

Do you know this dog?



ORANJESTAD -- The Cas Animal Foundation of Aruba is dedicated to rescuing abandoned and abused dogs off island streets, ideally to be placed in a good home. No matter how badly injured or weakened by disease, Cas Animal founder, Kirsten Arndt, has discovered hundreds of times over that with proper medical care, they can be rehabilitated to be a wonderful friend to a loving person. Often, their afflictions are only superficial, but rendering them unattractive, which is no reason, in Kirsten's opinion, to deprive them of a happy life and the chance to be a loyal, loving companion.

The foundation also provides many other services regarding the care and rescue of dogs, not the least of which is reuniting loving owners with their lost companions. The latest of these was found on Friday evening, January 3, wandering the streets of San Barbola. He is a very sweet affectionate young dog, who appears to have been terrorized by the continuing fireworks, and managed to break from his chain. He is wearing a blue and white collar, which was still dragging a few broken links when he was found. He also had badly cut on rear paw, so he was taken to the vet, where it was treated and bandaged.

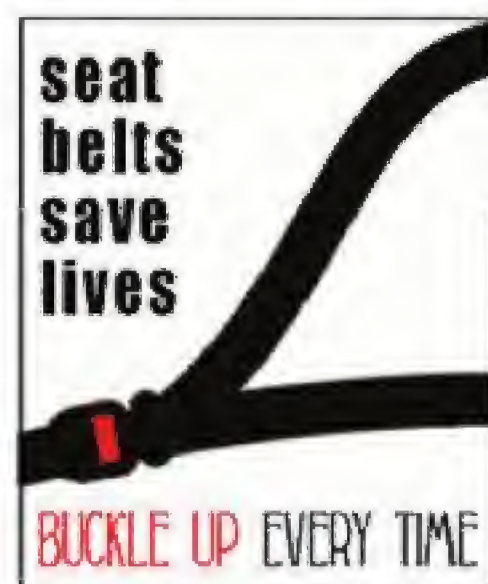
Anyone familiar with the dog and its owner are asked to please contact Kirsten at 742-8732 so he can be returned. Until then, he is safe at her sanctuary. The sanctuary also has a new crop of adorable pup-

pies who are desperately in need of good homes, for anyone who wishes to start out the 2014 right, with a new, devoted friend.

Presently, Cas Animal has everything in place to embark on its ultimate mission: the construction of Aruba's first, strictly no-kill dog shelter. The facility will house close to 300 dogs, plus cats and have an on-site-clinic. It has been designed to run on renewable energy and be wholly sustainable. Until then, Kirsten has converted her home into a temporary sanctuary. Presently, she cares for around 50 dogs she has rescued, with the ever-present hope of placing them in good homes. Whether they are adopted or not, she will continue to care for and love them, despite lost limbs from accidents, or a missing eye. They have a happy life and the companionship they crave. With only a few bureaucratic kinks to iron out, construction should begin early this year.

Anyone who may be interested in adopting a dog can, even if you are not an island resident. Call Kirsten at 742-8732 and she will help you through the process of acquiring the papers and a carrier needed to take home one of our sweet, affectionate cunucu dogs, who make excellent watch dogs, too. As this story demonstrates, this is done regularly and many happy owners find great pleasure in being reminded every day of Aruba by the loving new companion.

The medical and feeding costs of rescued animals is never ending. Those wishing to support Kirsten's work with donations can do so in the form of payment to the Cas Animal Foundation account at the Contreras Veterinary Clinics, call: 587-0917. Donations can be made directly to the foundation's account: Cas Animal Foundation, CMB Bank account # 25762110. Kirsten maintains an animal ambulance, so also call her to report a dog in distress.



The Tourism Outlook for 2014

Continued from page 4

5. Transportation issues. With the merger of airlines around the world tourism leaders can expect higher costs and a continual downgrading of services. Airlines have become the business that travelers love to hate. In defense of the airline industry, the risks of running an airline continue to grow and the profit margins continue to shrink. Should the cost of fuel continue to climb, then expect reductions in service, fewer flights and lighter and less comfortable aircraft. The travel industry's dependency on air travel will continue to be a major problem. On the other hand, many nations have established functioning bus and train alternatives and these alternative forms of public transportation, along with private vehicles, may become a short haul substitute for problems in air travel.



6. New Opportunities for alternative travel experiences. Many of the legacy destinations will have to compete with new travel experiences. A new generation will seek combination tourism in which it can mix business with pleasure.

7. Business travelers will expect more. Business travelers around the world expect free internet and wi-fi services. Many business travelers now use some form of tablet rather than a laptop computer. These people need access to free printing

via the Internet, flexible check-in and check-out times and dining options that are both affordable and varied. Travelers will continue to seek healthy food options and increased after work opportunities.

8. Congratulations to a number of places around the world which have come up with new creative measures in their tourism offerings. Panama has created a program to provide visitors with one month of free health insurance. The Dominican Republic has created perhaps the world's best trained tourism police force. The US has begun to allow entrance, at least for returning US citizens, via computers rather than forcing everyone to stand in line. These are a few of the creative innovations that should give tourism professionals hope that 2014 may be the best year ever for tourism.

'Frozen' warms up North American movie-goers

LOS ANGELES, January 5, 2014 (AFP) - Disney animated musical "Frozen" claimed top spot at the North American box office this weekend, deposing the latest instalment of "The Hobbit" fantasy trilogy, estimates showed Sunday.

A loosely based retelling of a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale, "Frozen" added another \$20.7 million in earnings, taking its seven-week haul in the United States and Canada to just under \$298 million.

In second place was horror film "Paranormal Activity: The Marked Ones," the fifth movie of the hugely successful franchise which opened with \$18.2 million, box office tracker Exhibitor Relations reported.

The "Paranormal Activity" franchise has earned more than \$750 million worldwide since the original low-budget film, made for just \$15,000, took the box office by storm in 2009.

Last week's top dog, "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug", fell to third spot with \$16.3 million.

The second part of director Peter Jackson's trilogy of films, based on J.R.R. Tolkien's beloved classic, has earned \$229.6 million to date in North America.

In fourth spot was Martin Scorsese's latest collaboration with actor Leonardo DiCaprio, "The Wolf of Wall Street," earning \$13.4 million in its second weekend.



The movie is based on the debauched rise and fall of disgraced Wall Street financier Jordan Belfort (DiCaprio), who conned his way to hundreds of millions in the 1990s while maintaining a notoriously drug-fuelled lifestyle.

Critically acclaimed comedy "American Hustle" -- starring Christian Bale and Amy Adams as grifters who team up with an FBI agent, played by Bradley Cooper, to bring down other con artists -- was fifth with \$13.2 million.

In sixth place was "Anchorman 2," the Will Ferrell comedy which sees him reprise his role as screwball newsman Ron Burgundy. The sequel took \$11.1 million in its third week of release.

Seventh was taken by "Saving Mr. Banks," a drama about Walt Disney's quest to make a film adaptation of Mary Poppins, with \$9.1 million.

Its stars -- Tom Hanks as Disney and Emma Thompson

as Poppins' anti-Hollywood author -- have both been nominated for Golden Globes.

In eighth was Ben Stiller's romantic comedy "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" an updated adaptation of James Thurber's famous 1939 short story, about a strait-laced office worker who loses himself in heroic daydreams.

The film, which stars Stiller in the lead role, took \$8.2 million.

In ninth place was the second film in the blockbuster "Hunger Games" franchise with \$7.4 million, taking its overall earnings to \$407.5 million in North America alone.

In 10th was "Grudge Match," a comedy seeing Sylvester Stallone and Robert De Niro play geriatric former boxers who agree to climb into the ring one last time to settle a feud.

The movie -- nicknamed "Aging Bull" by one critic -- took \$5.4 million.

Hospital: Ex-Israel PM Sharon faces 'imminent' death



TEL AVIV (AFP) - Former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon yesterday was facing "imminent" death, the Tel Aviv hospital where he is in critical condition said.

The health of the 85-year-old Sharon, who was dubbed "the Bulldozer" both for his style and physique, has been worsening since Wednesday when he suffered serious kidney problems after surgery.

And yesterday, the director of Tel Hashomer hospital said Sharon was "still in danger of imminent death" although his "heart is holding out better than we thought".

"I am more pessimistic than I was before... his vital functions, especially renal, haven't picked up," Zeev Rotstein told reporters.

"I can't see the future, but there's not possible way out of this."

Man dies as storms continue to batter Britain

LONDON (AFP) - A man died after his mobility scooter fell into the River Thames yesterday, police said, as dozens of flood warnings remained in place across Britain.

The 47-year-old was pulled from the river near Oxford, south England, after he fell in while trying to avoid a flooded pathway.

Police are treating his death as unexplained.

More than 200 homes along the west coast of Britain have been flooded after heavy rains, strong winds and high tides hit the country over recent days.

Around 70 flood warnings remain in place with more

stormy weather forecast.

"The risk of flooding to the coast will continue over the next few days, especially on the south and west coast and along the Severn estuary," said Environment Agency spokesman Jonathan Day.

Weather reports suggest further rainfall will arrive in the next 24 hours, placing the already full waterways under further pressure.

Rescuers are still searching for 18-year-old Harry Martin, who disappeared after going to take photographs of stormy seas in Devon, southwest England, on Thursday.

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General Mills says it will stop using GMOs in its Cheerios

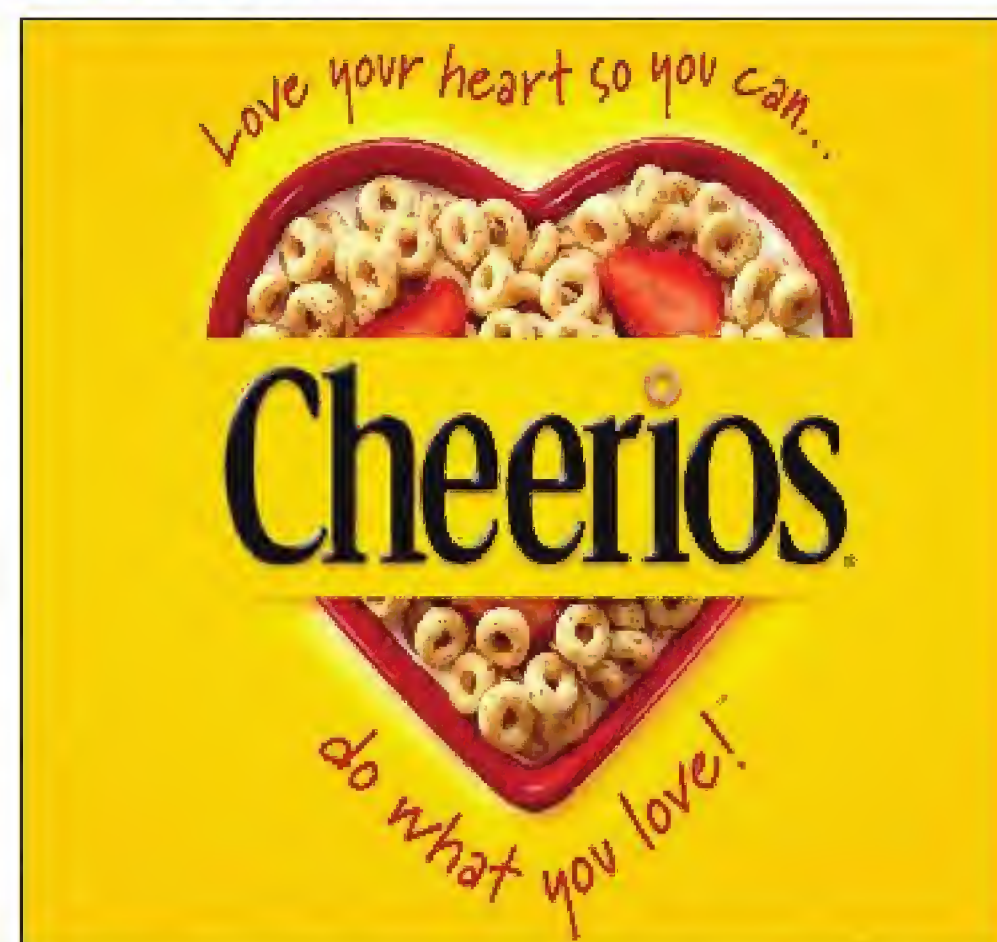
General Mills said it will stop using genetically modified organisms in its Cheerios breakfast cereal amid growing opposition to the use of such ingredients, according to a report.

The company made the announcement on its website, saying it would no longer source genetically modified corn and sugar to make the breakfast cereal.

General Mills said Cheerios has always been made with whole grain oats, not GMO oats. "We do use a small amount of corn starch in cooking, and just one gram of sugar per serving for taste," according to the statement, from Tom Forsythe a spokesman for Minneapolis-based General Mills. That will stop, he said.

The company said the change isn't about safety.

For General Mills, which introduced the Cheerios brand



for more than 70 years ago, the move applies only to original Cheerios, not other varieties of the cereal.

The familiar yellow box

will remain the same, but will now say: "not made with genetically modified ingredients."



FRANCE, Grenoble : Michael Schumacher's father Rolf, left, and brother Ralf arrive at Grenoble Hospital, French Alps, Sunday Jan. 5, 2014 where his son, German retired racing legend Michael Schumacher, is still in an induced coma after his December 29 skiing accident. A camera fixed to the ski helmet of Michael Schumacher is being inspected by investigators to see if it can yield any clues as to the circumstances of the accident. Schumacher's 14-year-old son Mick, who was skiing with his father at the time, was also being questioned by investigators. French authorities are examining various factors in the ski accident, in which Schumacher's head hit a rock so hard his helmet was split in two. (AFP PHOTO)



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Military chief: Iran ready to help Iraq battle Qaeda

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran's deputy chief of staff General Mohammad Hejazi said Sunday the Islamic republic was prepared to provide military equipment and advice to Iraq to help it battle Al-Qaeda.

"If the Iraqis ask, we will supply them with equipment and advice, but they have no need of manpower," Hejazi was cited by the official IRNA news agency as saying.

Hejazi said there had not been any request from Iraq to "carry out joint operations against the 'takfiri' terrorists," a term used to describe Al-Qaeda.

Iraqi forces are preparing a major attack to retake the city of Fallujah, which has been taken over by fighters from the Al-Qaeda-linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which is also a major force in the rebellion against President

Bashar al-Assad in neighbouring Syria.

Both Iran and Iraq are predominantly Shiite Muslim nations, and their governments have strengthened political and economic ties in recent years.

Al-Qaeda is a Sunni Muslim organisation that views Shiites as apostates.

The takeover of Fallujah and parts of Anbar provincial capital Ramadi, farther west, is the first time militants have exercised such open control in major cities since the height of the bloody insurgency that followed the US-led invasion of 2003.

Washington said it would help Baghdad in its fight against Al-Qaeda-linked militants but that there would be no return of US troops, and Iran on Sunday also offered assistance.



INDIA, KOLKATA : An Indian Aam Admi Party (AAP) activist holds posters during a rally to protest against the gangrape and murder of a teenager in Kolkata on January 5, 2014. An Indian teenager near the eastern city of Kolkata has been gangraped twice and then burned alive, police said, sparking protests after she died of her injuries. The 16-year-old was assaulted first on October 26, 2013 and then again the day after by a group of more than six men near her family's home in Madhyagram town, about 25 kilometres (15 miles) north of Kolkata. After being set on fire on December 23, she died in a state-run hospital on December 31. A top state official said authorities would move quickly to ensure those responsible for the girl's rape and death were brought to justice, the Press Trust of India reported. (AFP PHOTO)

MOKO RESIDENCE 2 In Front of Arawa Park



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18 dead, polling booths firebombed as Bangladesh votes

DHAKA (AFP) - Thousands of protesters firebombed polling stations and at least 18 people were killed as Bangladesh's ruling Awami League cruised to victory yesterday in an election boycotted by the opposition.

Police said they had opened

fire at protesters as they torched more than 200 polling stations and stole and burnt ballot papers to try to sabotage the poll. Two of those killed were beaten to death while guarding polling stations in northern districts but most of

the victims were opposition supporters.

The first 78 results for the remaining seats showed the Awami League winning in 59 constituencies while allied parties or independents mopped up in the other 19.

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New York may allow medical marijuana use: report



list of states which have taken an increasingly progressive stance on marijuana use. Colorado this week became the first US state to legalize the drug for recreational use.

The Times reported that New York's new policy would be far stricter than in California, which has already loosened its rules on medical marijuana.

In California, people suffering from mild ailments can obtain prescriptions for the drug; in New York it will be made available in only 20 designated hospitals across the state for individuals suffering from cancer, glaucoma or other diseases.

New York retains some of the most draconian sanctions of any US state for individuals caught dealing or using drugs.

However Cuomo's apparent policy U-turn would inch it closer to the softer policies that are rapidly gaining traction in the United States.

NEW YORK (AFP) - New York is planning to loosen its marijuana laws to allow limited use of the drug by people suffering serious illness, the New York Times reported Saturday, citing state officials.

The newspaper reported on its website that Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo -- a long-time opponent of legalizing medical marijuana -- was planning to announce the new guideline next week in an executive action.

The decision would see New York mirror a growing

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France recalls contaminated baby IV nutrient bags after 3 deaths

GRENOBLE (AFP) - France's government said Saturday it has recalled a batch of nutrient bags used by a hospital in the Alps to feed babies intravenously after three infants died because of a bacterial contamination.

The parents of the three newborns, who died on different days in early December, have filed criminal complaints for manslaughter against the hospital, located in the town of Chambéry in southeast France.

Analyses of several unused IV bags from the batch used to give the newborns nutrients while in the hospital's neonatal intensive care ward showed they all contained bacteria, the hospital told the parents.

"We're lodged the complaint to find out what happened. There was a failure in the system and this failure

needs to be found so it never happens again," said the 37-year-old father of one of the infants, who gave his first name as Laurent.

Local prosecutors investigating the case said they would make no comment before next week.

France's health minister, Marisol Touraine, announced all the batch that included the affected IV bags had been withdrawn.

She called the deaths "an extremely grave accident".

The director of the hospital, Guy-Pierre Martin, told a news conference Saturday that the contaminated IV nutrient bags all came from a French pharmaceutical firm, but he refused to identify it, saying that was up to French government authorities.

He did not identify the lethal bacteria either.

He said the hospital would assume its responsibilities if the investigation found it liable.

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More than half of Spaniards want king to abdicate: report

MADRID (AFP) - Sixty-two percent of Spaniards want their country's scandal-hit King Juan Carlos to abdicate and fewer than half support the monarchy in general, a poll published on Sunday showed.

A majority however support his son and heir Felipe and believe he could restore the family's prestige, according to the study by pollster Sigma Dos for El Mundo newspaper.

Juan Carlos, who turned 76 on Sunday, has seen his popularity plunge over the past three years, largely due to a corruption scandal centred on his son-in-law and a luxury elephant-hunting trip the king made to Africa in 2012.

He has also suffered from ailing health, which together with the scandals have raised speculation about the future of his reign.

The number of people wanting him to abdicate in favour of Felipe surged by 17 percent to 62 percent. Sixty-six percent had a positive view of the prince and 56 percent thought he could improve the royals' image if he took over.

General support for the monarchy as an institution, however, fell below half to 49.9 percent, according to the poll.

Juan Carlos is widely respected for his role in Spain's transition to democracy after the death of dictator General Francisco Franco in 1975, but the king's image has been tarnished in recent years.



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Pope announces first visit to Holy Land, May 24-26

VATICAN CITY (AFP) - Pope Francis said Sunday he will make his first trip to the Holy Land, visiting Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem in May.

"In the climate of joy typical of this Christmas period, I would like to announce that from May 24 to 26, God willing, I will carry out a pilgrimage to the Holy Land," Francis told crowds gathered in St Peter's Square for the traditional Angelus prayer.

Francis said the date of the announcement -- January 5 -- was significant because it

"commemorates the historic meeting between pope Paul VI and patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople", 50 years ago.

Their meeting in Jerusalem led to the rescinding of the excommunications of 1054 that caused the Great Schism between the churches of the East and West.

Francis said he would hold an "ecumenical meeting with all the representatives of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem" at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in east Jerusalem, which encloses the sites where Jesus is believed to

have been crucified, buried and resurrected.

Among those attending, he said, would be the current patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew.

The assembly of Catholic bishops in the Holy Land warmly welcomed the announcement, expressing confidence that the trip would not be only an international event, but "mainly a message of love and brotherhood to all" those living in the countries Francis visits.

And they underlined that the meeting with Patriarch

Bartholomew would aim to "highlight the desire for unity amongst all churches".

Francis was invited to visit the Holy Land by Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, who said he would "walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ".

The 77-year-old pontiff has made many appeals for peace in the Middle East. During his meeting with Abbas, he called for "a just and lasting solution" to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

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EARLY BIRD SPECIAL

3D-printed components flown in British fighter jet



File image of a 31 Squadron Tornado fighter jet of the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force.

LONDON (AFP) - A Tornado fighter jet fitted with metal components created on a 3D printer undertook a successful test flight in Britain last month, defence company BAE Systems said Sunday.

The plane was equipped with a 3D-printed protective cover for the cockpit radio, a protective guard in the landing gear and support struts on

the air intake door, the British firm said.

The announcement follows NASA's successful test of a 3D-printed rocket engine component in August last year, as aerospace companies seek cheaper and quicker ways to manufacture engineering parts.

"You are suddenly not fixed in terms of where you have to manufacture these

things," said Mike Murray, Head of Airframe Integration at BAE Systems, announcing the successful test flight at the firm's airfield in Warton, northwest England.

"You can manufacture the products and whatever base you want, providing you can get a machine there, which means you can also start to support other platforms such as ships and aircraft carriers.

"And if it's feasible to get machines out on the front line, it also gives improved capability where we wouldn't traditionally have any manufacturing support."

BAE said some of the parts -- produced at a Royal Air Force base in eastern England -- cost less than £100 (\$165, 120 euros) to manufacture, and had the potential to save hundreds of thousands of pounds every year, without giving details.

Magma clue to Earth's super-volcanoes

PARIS (AFP) - Geologists on Sunday reported insights into super-volcanoes, the brooding, enigmatic giants of Earth's crust whose eruptions are as catastrophic as they are rare.

The buoyancy of molten rock, or magma, is the key explanation as to why these monsters blow their stack, according to the report in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Super-volcanoes include Yellowstone, in the US state of Wyoming, which spewed out more than 1,000 cubic kilometres (240 cubic miles) of ash and rock when it last erupted about 600,000 years ago.

Events of this kind can chill the planet's surface by up to 10 degrees Celsius (18 degrees Fahrenheit) for a decade or more because the ash, carried into the stratosphere, reflects sunlight, according to a 2005 study.

By comparison, the biggest volcanic eruption of the last quarter-century was that of the Philippines volcano Pinatubo in 1991, which discharged a relatively puny 10 cubic kilometres (2.4 cubic miles).

In conventional volcanoes, activity is determined by the size of the magma chamber, meaning the rocky vault below the volcano, the investigations found.

Relatively small in volume, the chamber in conventional volcanoes is replenished regularly by bursts of upwelling magma, which is expelled in moderate amounts when the pressure becomes too much.

Density of magma

But in super-volcanoes, the magma chamber is simply too big to be pressurised by magma injections alone. In these leviathans, what happens is that a buoyant kind of magma steadily accumulates in the chamber.

Like a kettle, the chamber is initially strong enough to resist the pressure but eventually breaks apart in a cataclysmic discharge.

"Until now, nobody had measured the density of the magma that is present in the magma chambers of super-volcanoes," EZH's Wim Malfait said in an email exchange with AFP.

The density is important, he explained, "because magma is less dense than solid rock, the magma in a magma chamber pushes on the roof of the chamber."

"This is similar to holding a football under water -- the air in the football is lighter than the surrounding water, so the water pushes it against your hand. Overpressure is enough to start a super-eruption if the magma chamber is thick enough," Malfait said.

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The top ten countries with the highest tax rates

ORANJESTAD -- Only two things in life are certain — death and taxes. And for some, an extremely high tax rate is equivalent to death. But then again, for most people, any tax rate greater than 0 percent is considered excessive.

In France, there have been proposals to increase the tax rate for those earning more than \$1.23 million to 75 percent from the current 48 percent. In the United States, the top tax rate stands at 35 percent, with proposals calling for its increase to 39.6 percent. It was one of the most contentious issues during the last presidential elections.

It is worth noting, however, that in the case of France, only a miniscule 0.46 percent of the population would be affected by the proposal to increase the tax rate for the upper echelon of society. In the United States, the most vociferous of those who oppose the increase are billionaire businessmen. The last time the United States had such a high tax rate was during the Clinton administration, and those years were marked by economic prosperity.

Maybe they would not complain too much if they compare the rates being levied upon them to those being charged to the upper echelon in other countries. Here are the top ten countries with the highest tax rates in the world.

1. Aruba — 58.95 percent for those with income of at least \$171,149

The country is known to have the highest standard of living in the Caribbean. This Dutch territory has the highest income tax rate in the world. It actually used to hover above 60 percent back in 2007. Married individuals who meet the income requirement are charged a slightly lower 55.85 percent. The country also has a 25 percent tax on capital gains. The rate is double than the average rate in the Caribbean, and especially astounding considering the zero income tax regime in the Bahamas, Bermuda and Cayman Islands.

2. Sweden — 56.6 percent for those with income of at least \$85,841

Sweden is a welfare state where citizens get free education and subsidized healthcare. Everyone is also guaranteed a basic pension. Even public transportation is subsidized. All these are the results of an aggressive tax scheme by the Swedish government in which those with extremely high incomes are levied a tax rate of 56.6 percent. As this rate will only kick for those with in-

come of \$85,841, most Swedes do not worry about it as it is way above the average income of \$48,800. Sweden also has a 30 percent tax on investment income, as well as significant rates for property holdings and social security.

3. Denmark — 55.38 percent for those with income of at least \$70,633

This rate is actually an adjusted rate already, as the top marginal rate used to be 62.3 percent in 2008. Denmark also taxes dividend income by 28 percent and capital gains by 42 percent. Even the Danish church is not exempt, as they are liable for taxes ranging from 0.4 to 1.5 percent. Gifts to relatives over a certain threshold amount are also subject to 15 percent tax.

4. The Netherlands — 52 percent for those with income of at least \$70,090

The Netherlands has the highest tax rate in Western Europe, where the regional average stands at 45.7 percent. Its government also charges capital gains tax of 25 percent, land transfer tax of 6 percent and inheritance tax of up to 40 percent. Average income in the country is \$57,000.

5. Belgium — 50 percent for those with income of at least \$45,037

Just like its neighbor the Netherlands, Belgium's tax rate is higher than the average for the region. It also charges a social security rate of 13 percent for employees and 35 percent for employers, municipal taxes of up to 11 percent, and capital gains tax of up to 33 percent. The country actually has the highest tax and social security burden in the world, with single taxpayers taking home less than 45 percent of their actual income. Those in the higher income brackets take home less than 40 percent. Average income in the country is \$45,037.

6. Austria — 50 percent for those with income of at least \$74,442

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Aruba



The Netherlands

9. Finland — 49.2 percent for those with income of at least \$87,222

The top rate used to be 53.5 percent, but this was cut in recent years. Municipal tax can be as much as 21.5 percent, and a church tax of up to 2 percent. Capital gains can reach 28 percent. The government plans to increase taxes in 2015, with the new rates targeting high income and pension owners and those receiving inheritances above \$1.3 million.

10. Ireland — 48 percent for those with income of at least \$40,696

The top marginal rate has been increasing steadily the past few years, as it stood at only 45 percent in 2008. Social security tax is at 4 percent. Taxes on gifts, inheritances and capital gains can reach as much as 30 percent. It has the lowest corporate tax rate in Europe, however, at only 12.5 percent.

Aside from the high income tax rate, it also has a social security rate of 18 percent, bonus payments are charged 6 percent, and capital gains tax is at 25 percent. Money stashed away in Swiss banks is also taxed through a special agreement between the Swiss and Austrian governments.

7. Japan — 50 percent for those with income of at least \$228,880

Japan has the highest income tax rate in the whole of Asia, where the average is only at 23 percent. Note however that the high rate only kicks in at \$228,880, which is an extremely high income level in a country where the average income is \$53,200.

8. United Kingdom — 50 percent for those with income of at least \$234,484

This will only last until April 2013, when the rate will be cut to 45 percent. Those earning less than \$14,300 are exempted from paying taxes. Social security taxes can be as much as 14 percent, while capital gains can reach 28 percent.



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CHINA, HONG KONG : This photo taken on January 3, 2014 shows apartment buildings in front of office blocks in Hong Kong. Home prices in the southern Chinese city have risen by 120 percent since 2008, and by more than 30 per cent from their previous peak in 1997, with prices in the luxury market being pushed up by wealthy buyers from mainland China. (AFP PHOTO)

Auto industry has soared since 2010, leading economic recovery

CHICAGO -- The auto industry finished 2013 with more sales, more jobs and big expansion plans, solidifying its key role in the economic recovery.

It was the industry's best year since 2007. The Great Recession drove U.S. auto sales to a low of 10.4 million vehicles sold in 2009, but the industry has rocketed back since, to 15.6 million sold last year.

"Auto sales were one of the brightest spots on the economic horizon last year," said Carl Tannenbaum, chief economist for Northern Trust Corp. in Chicago.

Car companies and parts manufacturers have added more than 173,000 jobs over the last four years and now employ more than 826,000 workers in the U.S., according to federal jobs reports. That's still down from the 1.1

million before the recession, but it represents vital growth, economists said.

"Autos and housing are on the leading edge of overall economic growth, and we are starting to see the ripple effects on other parts of the economy," said Gary Schlossberg, an economist at Wells Capital Management.

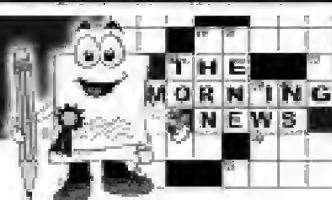
SATURDAY'S Crossword Answer

E	L	S	A	S		P	L	O	T
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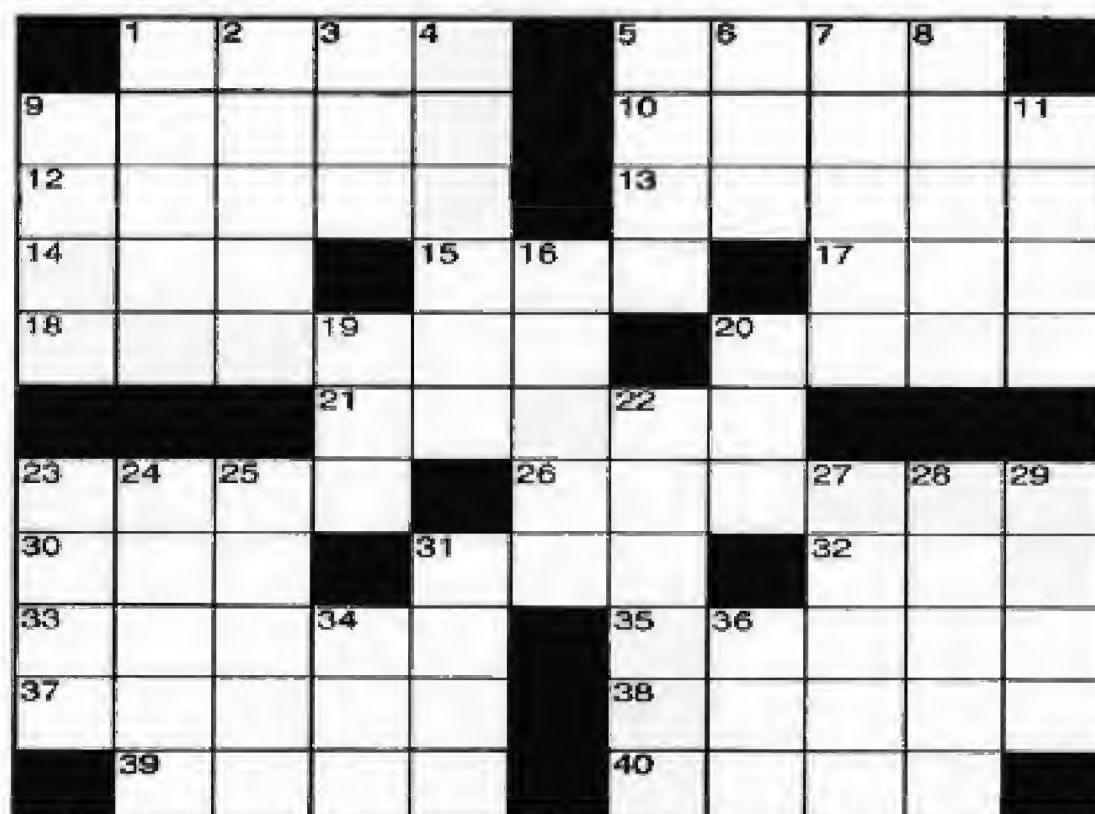
- 1 Wilson of "Legally Blonde"
5 In that event (2 wds.)
9 Chaos
10 Playthings
12 Ordeal
13 Flow out
14 Part of history
15 Alias abbr.
17 Actress Farrow
18 Submitted
- via the mail (2 wds.)
20 Imitates
21 Lindros and Heiden
23 Volcanic liquid
26 "My Friend ____"
30 Island (Fr.)
31 Teachers' gp.
32 Dancer Miller
33 Biblical

- mountain
35 Lakeshore's recess
37 Squirrel's favorite
38 Shopping centers
39 Actress Samms
40 Tiff

DOWN

- 1 Jumbo
2 Confederation
3 Korean car company
4 Bakery treat

- 5 Brain wave
6 ____ trot (dance)
7 Slouch
8 Blast from the past
9 School gps.
11 Sail the seven ____
16 Cutting tool
19 Hot beverage
20 "Just ____ thought!" (2 wds.)
22 Small ____ court
23 "Mona ____"
24 Wonderland wanderer
25 Snake's poison
27 Type of lily
28 Prepared to pray
29 Industrious insects
31 1492 ship
34 Shirt sleeve
36 Short snooze



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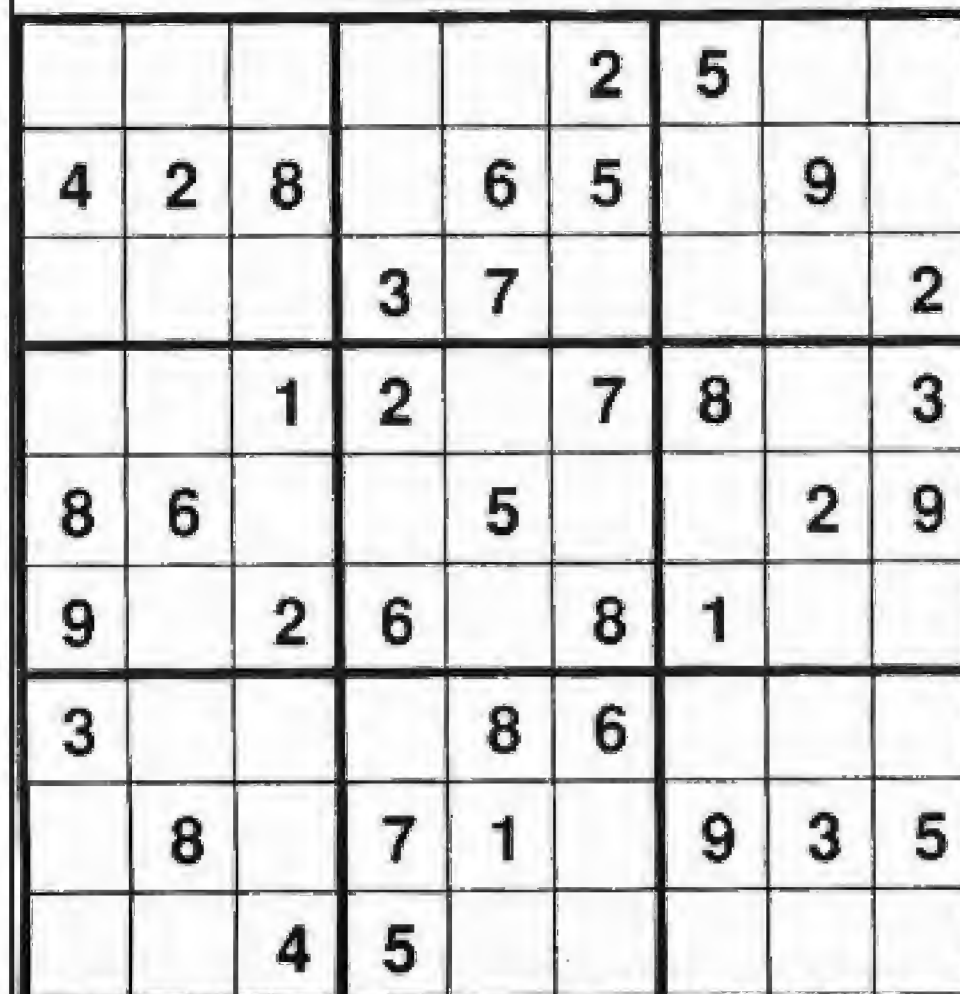
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SOLUTION

9	4	9	8	2	9	7	6	1
5	8	6	7	1	9	8	2	
1	7	2	9	8	8	4	9	6
7	9	1	8	9	2	4	6	
6	2	4	1	5	7	9	8	
8	9	4	6	2	1	7	5	
2	8	7	6	4	5	1	9	
4	6	5	9	9	1	8	2	7
9	1	5	2	7	8	6	4	

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Acqua Condominium Aruba announces that construction has been progressing at a brisk pace

The East Tower, overlooking Palm Beach boasts 208 condos, spread over 14 floors. The two top building floors embrace 16 penthouse apartments with majestic views. The building is simply awaiting the windows and a few finishing touches, to conclude construction, very possibly by the end of this year. Following the completion of the elegant club house, the tropical landscaped pool and the spacious parking lots, the condos will be delivered to their proud new owners. Ground has been cleared for the North Tower, which will follow as soon as the East Tower is completed.

A spokesperson for Acqua Condo Aruba reports that the project is receiving tremendous attention, particularly for the winter months. Snow-birds longing to reside in a vacation home on Aruba are now able to visualize this dream coming true, in a manner that leaves them utterly care free when not in residence.

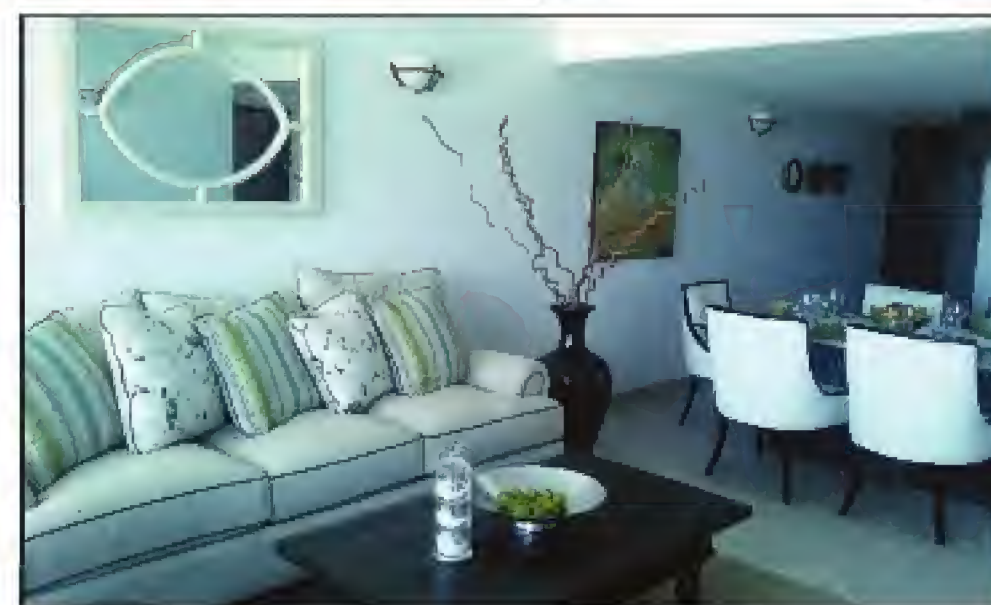
Making the decision to purchase and acting on it quickly, was recently made even more imperative. In November of 2010, the island government of Aruba reiterated its commitment to a building moratorium for the next 10 years, making



Acqua Condominium a truly unique investment opportunity, as it is the one and only high-rise condo project, on property land, in the island's most-desired location.

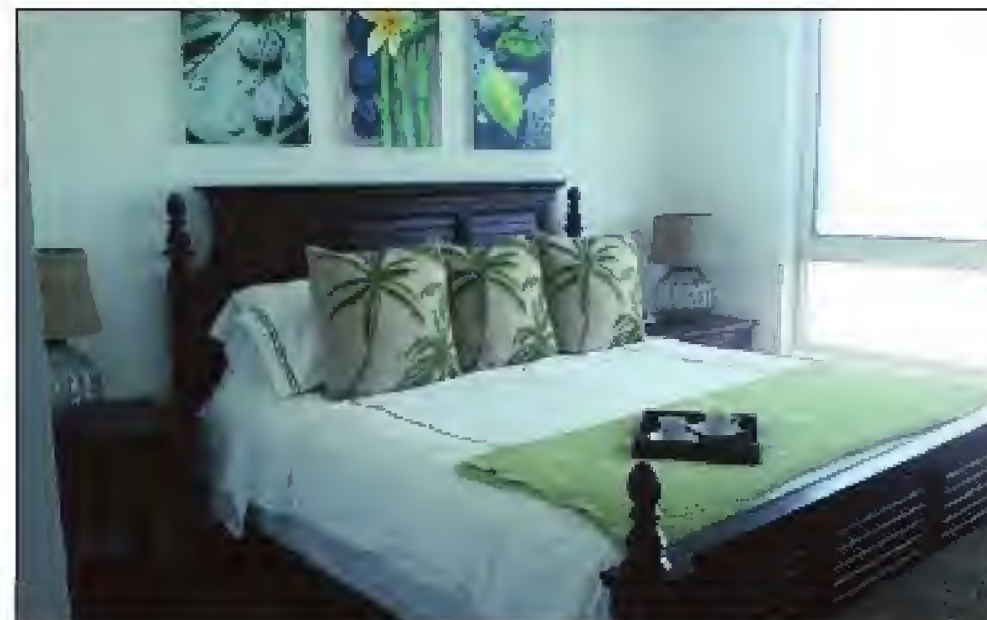
In view of the moratorium news, and the project's lucrative position, developers were compelled to discontinue the pre-construction discounts. Nevertheless, other purchase incentives have introduced. Special discount offers in effect at present are:

Pay 30% down payment and get 10% discount, 50% down payment, get 15% discount, pay in full for a 25% discount. Prices start at \$ 296,800 for a 2-bedroom/2 bathroom apartment. Paying cash will allow the buyer to obtain this very same unit for only \$ 222,600 -



remarkable savings!

Other incentives include the possibility of a time-share trade in. Ownership in any of a number of time-share projects may be factored in as a bargaining chip, with certain restrictions. The opportunity to profit from your purchase is also available to buyers when



they place their unit in a rental pool, with a guaranteed 6-months income for the first year.

If the image of Aqua Condominium tugs at your heartstrings, you are invited to visit the sales gallery and the two elegant model-suites available for viewing, fully finished with

luxurious touches and high-end amenities.

The sales center is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. nonstop, and Saturday and Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. You are invited to meet the sales team who will guide you through the purchase of the stylish condo of your dreams, allowing you to return to Aruba as often as you wish.

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Acqua Condominium Aruba, J.E. Irausquin Boulevard z/n. Palm Beach Aruba.

India successfully launches cutting-edge cryogenic rocket

BANGALORE (AFP) - India on Sunday successfully launched its first rocket using domestically produced booster technology after several previous missions had failed, taking another step forward in its ambitious space programme.

The Indian-made cryogenically-powered rocket blasted off from the southern spaceport of Sriharikota as scheduled, as Delhi tries to join an elite club of countries which have mastered the complex technology.

The 415-tonne rocket deployed a two-tonne advanced communications satellite some 17 minutes after blast-off, said Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman Dr K. Radhakrishnan.

"I am extremely proud and happy to say that Team ISRO has done it," Radhakrishnan announced at mission control in Andhra Pradesh state, sparking a roar of applause from colleagues.

"Team ISRO and the project directors all have put their

heart and soul in making this proud moment for the country," he said.

India has for years been trying to develop its own cryogenic rocket engines that are designed to put heavier satellites into high orbits, about 36,000 kilometres (22,000 miles) from Earth.

The powerful booster technology, using super-cooled liquid fuel, is a much needed tool to help India capture a larger share of the lucrative global market for launching commercial satellites.

But the technology has only been successfully developed by a handful of countries including the United States, Russia, France, Japan and China as well as the European Space Agency.

India's project has had to overcome a string of hurdles and mishaps, including an aborted launch in August last year several hours before lift-off after fuel was found to be leaking from one of the rocket's engines.

The first India-built rocket crashed into the Bay of Bengal just minutes after take-off in April 2010 after the cryogenic engines failed to ignite.

"If we succeed this time, India will join a select club of space-faring nations with indigenous cryogenic engine capability to launch above two-tonne class satellites," ISRO director Deviprasad Karnik told AFP before the launch.

"The twin purpose of this launch mission is to flight-test once again our own cryogenic engine and put into the geostationary orbit a heavy communication satellite," Karnik added.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh congratulated the team on Sunday's mission, which cost 3.65 billion rupees (\$58 million) -- 2.2 billion rupees for the rocket and 1.45 billion rupees for the satellite.


"It is yet another important step that the country has taken in the area of science and technology," Singh said in a tweet.

In November India successfully lifted into orbit a spacecraft bound for Mars as it tries to become the first Asian nation to reach the Red Planet.

It has taken ISRO scientists years to develop cryogenic motors after India's attempt to import the technology from Russia in 1992 failed because of opposition from the United States.

The country sees its space programme as an achievement that highlights its emergence as a major world economy, and many citizens take great pride in it.

But the cost of the programme has attracted criticism as the government struggles to tackle poverty and child malnutrition.



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World mourns 'Black Panther' Eusebio

Cont. from pg 16



One-man rescue act

In an early game for Benfica he had outshone Pele in a friendly with Santos, and in 1962 he scored the crucial goals in a 5-3 victory over Real Madrid in the European Cup final.

When Madrid's legendary Hungarian Ferenc Puskas symbolically handed his jersey to Eusebio after the match, the message was clear -- the torch had passed, and in 1965 Eusebio was awarded the Ballon d'Or.

But while Eusebio excelled with Benfica in Europe, it was his exploits at the 1966 World Cup for which he will be best remembered.

Eusebio's nine goals in England propelled Portugal to a third-place finish, and a succession of opposing teams simply had no answer to the power and pace of his play.

He scored twice in the 3-1 victory which sent holders Brazil out of the competition.

In the quarter-finals Eusebio was unstoppable, pulling off a one-man rescue act after Portugal went 3-0 down against

North Korea after just 20 minutes.

The Koreans were blown away by a four-goal display from Eusebio as the Portuguese won 5-3.

In the semi-final against England, Eusebio was effectively marked out of the match but he did find the net again. He scored his ninth of the tournament in the third-place play-off win over the Soviet Union.

He finished his 64-cap career having accumulated 41 goals for Portugal. He also earned European football's Golden Boot award twice and was Portugal's top scorer every season between 1964 and 1973.

He helped Benfica to 11 league championships and five domestic cups. He scored 733 times in 745 professional matches.

In 1975 he joined the flow of players involved in the ill-fated North American Soccer League, before retiring in 1979 after winding down his career in Mexico and Portugal.

Married with two daughters, in retirement he became an



ambassador for Benfica and the Portuguese football federation.

"Eusebio will always be eternal. Rest in peace," wrote current Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo, in a message posted on Facebook alongside a photo of himself and his hero.

On Sunday, the player's body was taken to Benfica's Luz stadium (Stadium of Light) in Lisbon where fans placed flowers and prayed in front of Eusebio's statue.

"For me, he is simply the creator of football," said 24-year-old fan, Luis Marques outside the arena.

A funeral mass will be held in the Seminary Church near the stadium today at 1600 GMT and the footballer will be laid to rest at the Lumiar cemetery, in the city's northern suburbs.

In line with Eusebio's wishes his coffin will, before the funeral ceremony, around 1330GMT, be carried around the stadium.

"Portugal has today lost one of its most beloved sons, Eusebio da Silva Ferreira. The country mourns his death. The country is officially in mourning," President Anibal Cavaco Silva said.

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Sanchez hat-trick puts Barca back on top



Alexis Sanchez of FC Barcelona celebrates after scoring his team's fourth goal to complete his hat-trick during the La Liga match between FC Barcelona and Elche FC

MADRID (AFP) - Barcelona moved back to the top of La Liga on goal difference with a comfortable 4-0 win over Elche on Sunday thanks to a hat-trick from Alexis Sanchez.

The Catalans are tied with Atletico Madrid on 49 points with the two set to meet for the first time in the league this season next weekend at the Vicente Calderon.

Lionel Messi was once again watching from the sidelines as he nears a comeback from a hamstring injury and Neymar was left on the bench having recently returned from a Christmas break in Brazil.

However, Sanchez and Pedro Rodriguez once again proved able deputies as they slotted home inside the opening 15 minutes.

Xavi Hernandez also missed a second-half penalty for the hosts, but it mattered little as Sanchez rolled home his second goal from Pedro's pass shortly afterwards.

And the Chilean sealed his first hat-trick for the club with a stunning free-kick 21 minutes from time.

Barca now lead Real Madrid by eight points, but Madrid can cut the gap on the leaders to five with victory over Celta Vigo today.

"We played very well. We had variation, precision, control and we had a lot of chances," said Barca boss Gerardo Martino.

"We were always concentrated through the game and limited the opponent to very few sights of goal."

"In the second-half especially we controlled the game completely."

And the Argentine was particularly pleased with the contribution of Pedro and Sanchez in the absence of Messi and Neymar.

"I was happy for Alexis because, as a coach, you always like to see players like he and Pedro who work so hard for the team get their reward."



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Chargers rout Bengals



Philip Rivers of San Diego celebrates with fans after defeating Cincinnati

The San Diego Chargers had everything working against them on Sunday. But they're used to having their backs against the wall by now.

San Diego was forced to play against the Cincinnati Bengals on the road. The weather was below 50 degrees on game day. Cincinnati scored 34.4 points per game at home in the regular season. The Bengals were undefeated at home this season.

The Chargers shouldn't

have even been playing on Sunday. A week earlier, San Diego barely qualified for the playoffs after Kansas City's Ryan Succop missed a 41-yard field goal that would have eliminated them.

Given that extra chance, the Chargers did not care about any of the obstacles at Cincinnati. Despite having so many factors working against them, the Chargers stepped up and pulled off a surprising 27-10 wildcard victory.

San Diego advance to play against the Denver Broncos next week.

The Chargers can thank their defense for Sunday's improbable win.

Bengals quarterback Andy Dalton is known for his post-season struggles, and the Chargers exploited him. Dalton completed 28-of-50 passes for 331 yards, one touchdown and two interceptions. Dalton also lost a fumble. All of his turnovers happened in the second half.

Coach Marvin Lewis is winless in five playoff games in Cincinnati during his 11-year tenure with the Bengals.

San Diego got into the playoffs with an amazing se-



Chargers' Defensive back Jahleel Addae celebrates after recovering a fumble against the Bengals

ries of events that culminated with the Chargers winning in overtime after Succop's miss in Week 17. Now they're one of eight teams still alive in the postseason.

Brazil prepared 'too late' for World Cup, blasts Blatter

PARIS (AFP) - Brazil's continuing struggles to keep their World Cup organisation on schedule are a consequence of starting preparations too late, FIFA president Sepp Blatter said Sunday.

"Brazil has come to realise that they started too late. They are the country who are the most delayed (in terms of World Cup organisation) since I have been at FIFA," Blatter told Swiss newspaper 24 Hours.

"Yet they are the only country who have had such a long time -- seven years -- to prepare."

The World Cup will be staged from June 12 to July 13, but the build-up has been plagued by construction delays, spiralling costs as well as civil discontent at the money being spent on the tournament as well as the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Last year's Confederations

Cup, a dress rehearsal for the World Cup, was plagued by angry demonstrations, but Blatter believes this year's showpiece should pass off relatively peacefully.

"I am an optimist, not a pessimist. Football will be protected. I believe that Brazilians will not attack football directly. This is the sport's home, it's a religion," he said.

"But we know there will be new demonstrations, protests. Last year, they were born of social networks. There was no goal, but at the World Cup they will be more directed, more structured."

Brrr...Fans deal with frigid temperatures



Green Bay Packers Fans pose prior to the NFC Wild Card Playoff game between the San Francisco 49ers and the Green Bay Packers at Lambeau Field on January 5, 2014 in Green Bay, Wisconsin.



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World mourns 'Black Panther' Eusebio

LISBON (AFP) - Eusebio, revered as football's "Black Panther", died on Sunday, aged 71, sending fans into mourning for a man who grew up in grinding African poverty to become one of the world's greatest players.

Eusebio da Silva Ferreira, who died of cardio-pulmonary arrest early on Sunday morning, reigned over Portuguese football in the 1960s, bringing glory to both his club Benfica and his country.

His death led to an outpouring of tributes with the Portuguese government decreeing three days of national mourning, with flags in Lisbon to fly at half mast ahead of his funeral on Monday.

"Football has lost a legend," FIFA president Sepp Blatter wrote on Twitter. "But Eusebio's place among the greats will never be taken away."

English great Bobby Charlton, who helped Manchester United to victory over Benfica in the 1968 European Cup final, said it had been a privilege to have known Eusebio.

"He was one of the finest players I ever had the privilege



Portugal, Lisbon : A fan hangs a scarf of Benfica football club on the bronze statue of late Benfica legend Eusebio da Silva Ferreira, also known as the "Black Panther", in front of the Luz stadium in Lisbon on January 5, 2014

to play against," Charlton said at Old Trafford on Sunday, where around 75,000 fans staged a minute's applause ahead of an English FC Cup game.

"Not only that, he was a true sportsman, as he proved in ap-

plauding (United goalkeeper) Alex Stepney for his save in the European Cup final.

"His goals record, for Benfica and overall, is incredible and stands the test of time."

The top Portuguese foot-

baller of all time, Eusebio rivalled all-time greats including Pele, Alfredo Di Stefano and Charlton.

"I was the best player in the world, top scorer in the world and Europe. I did everything,

except win a World Cup," Eusebio said in a interview in 2011, recalling his tears after Portugal's loss in the 1966 World Cup semi-final to England.

From humble origins in the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique, Eusebio was to emerge as one of the world's most feared strikers, combining panther-like pace with a ferocious shooting ability.

Born in 1942, the poor boy from Maputo rose to prominence in Mozambique football circles as a teenager through his performances for Sporting Lourenco Marques, a team with links to Sporting Lisbon.

With his exceptional technique, strength and goal-scoring record, it was not long before word of Eusebio's prowess soon filtered back to Portugal. In December 1960 he was offered trials with Sporting.

Although keen, Eusebio was not willing to risk leaving his beloved mother unless there was the firm promise of a contract. Sporting balked, creating an opening for Benfica, who snapped up the youngster's signature.

Continued inside on pg 14